



**STATEMENT OF PROCEEDINGS  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 739  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012  
<http://lachildrenscommission.org>**

**Monday, May 16, 2016**

**10:00 AM**

AUDIO FOR THE ENTIRE MEETING. (16-2571)

**Attachments:** [AUDIO](#)

Present: Commissioner Genevra Berger, Commissioner Carol O. Biondi, Commissioner Maria Brenes, Commissioner Patricia Curry, Commissioner Wendy Garen, Commissioner Sydney Kamlager, Commissioner Liz Seipel, Commissioner Janet Teague, Vice Chair Jacquelyn McCroskey, Vice Chair Wendy B. Smith and Chair Sunny Kang

Absent: Commissioner Candace Cooper and Commissioner John Kim

**I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

1. Call to Order. (16-1864)

**The meeting was called to order by Chair Kang at 10:00 a.m.**

2. Introduction of meeting attendees. (16-1865)

**Self-introductions were made.**

3. Approval of the minutes from the May 2, 2016 meeting. (16-1867)

**On motion of Commissioner Seipel, seconded by Commissioner Berger (Commissioners Cooper, Garen, Kamlager, and Kim being absent), this item was approved.**

**Attachments:** [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

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## **II. REPORTS**

### **4. Chair's Report. (16-1868)**

**Chair Kang reported that the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's Annual Conference will take place on October 4 6, 2016, in Garden Grove. A limited number of slots are available for Commissioners. Those interested in attending can obtain further details from Tamara N. Hunter, MSW, Executive Director.**

### **5. Director's Report by Philip L. Browning, Department of Children and Family Services (16-1870)**

**Philip L. Browning, Director, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) reported the following:**

- **The recently released, and not yet approved, Governor's budget indicates a decrease in revenue. Many funding requests are not substantial and/or not included;**
- **Discussions on how to go about moving children from placements in intensive levels of care to lower levels of care are ongoing. It is expected that rates paid for foster care, relative care, treatment foster care, and two levels of group care will be affected;**
- **Expenses for County services provided are not projected to decrease, the review and comparison of rates is very complicated;**
- **The new Child and Family Team process will be rolled out very soon. Although this will provide much better circumstances for the families, the new process brings many concerns, such as County reimbursements by the State for additional expenses incurred and the County's involvement with lawsuit settlement(s);**
- **Additional concerns include the County's participation in the Title IV-E Waiver California Well Being Project, which is anticipated to be extended, these benefits are limited and funding is difficult;**
- **All participating counties are very concerned; savings in expenses are not anticipated; and**
- **The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is a vital component to providing much needed services, as is their participation with funding issues; collaborations with DMH regarding these issues are ongoing.**

Discussion ensued regarding the shared responsibilities and funding allocations between DMH and DCFS; the reduction in funding; transforming funds from youth to adults, the homeless population and capital expenditures.

Mr. Browning explained the matching formula for funding allocations. The County provides their rate, and the Federal Government provides the remaining expense. However, clarification regarding the required responsibilities shared by DCFS and DMH is required.

Additionally, collaboration among County departments regarding how to provide mental health services in conjunction with the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program has led to a proposal to implement a similar approach that could be used to successfully implement other programs and comply with the Katie A. and Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) requirements.

Mr. Browning added the following:

- Collaborations between the Katie A. panel and DMH regarding claims filed for Medicaid benefits are ongoing;
- A search for a billing expert consultant to review Medicaid claims and identify additional claims that qualify as projected savings is ongoing with the assistance of the Katie A. panel and plaintiff's attorneys;
- The recent addition of new employees, and automation, is currently decreasing caseloads and a meeting was conducted in Lancaster to address any concerns in that office;
- CCR and Resource Family Approval (RFA) are critical and a team is designated to these topics. Brandon Nichols, Chief Deputy, is dedicated to the progress in these areas;
- A claim was filed about a 2014 incident involving a child placed in a group home, who had been taken to juvenile hall and stayed in the facility for longer than he should have, per the newspaper. There is protocol in place to prevent situations like this from occurring, and collaboration between departments and County Counsel will ensure effective protocol compliance, and minimize any further systemic issues;

- The childcare bridge program was not included in the May budget, likely due to competing priorities, but we should not give up on this issue;
- Although vital focus remains on funding for children; funding has detoured toward other equally important issues such as homelessness;
- Concerns regarding homeless children, and the number of DCFS clients were raised; this issue will be reviewed for further discussion;
- The number of children left behind and under County care due to parental deportation is not known, the Department of Justice cannot provide any details; however, DCFS does provide services to undocumented children who are victims of abuse and neglect. These issues will be reviewed for further discussion.

### **III. PRESENTATIONS**

6. Supporting Relative Caregivers: Legislation, Lessons Learned and Best Practices
  - Angie Schwartz, Alliance for Children's Rights/ Step Up Coalition (16-1871)

**Angie Schwartz, Policy Director, Alliance for Children's Rights/ Step Up Coalition, provided a brief overview of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and presented the following:**

- CCR started in 2012 as a result of a budget bill that was passed that year. It required the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to put together a stakeholder group to evaluate how to best reform the entire continuum of care so that children can be moved out of group homes and into family settings;
- CCR also looks at what other reforms we need to make to the entire system so that children can be successful in family settings;
- The continuum needs to be reformed to treat all families as important parts of the system. This includes our relatives, where 40% of children are placed in the State, and ensure those families get the funding and services they need;

- **Alliance for Children's Rights represents over 4,000 relatives every year and has been actively pushing for reforms that equalize the system and creates a truly Child Centered System in which children will get what they need regardless of where they are placed. We should assess children when they come into the system, determine the funding and services they need and provide them regardless of where the children are placed.**
- **AB403 is a Department (CDSS) bill that passed in 2015 in order to bring about the CCR changes. It's moving towards the Child-center System, but has not achieved it yet.**
  - **It does away with the different procedures used to license and approve foster families and creates one type of foster family placement. County licensed homes, approved relative homes, approved non-related extended family member homes, non-related legal guardianship, and certified homes of a Foster Family Agency (FFA) will now be resource families under the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process;**
  - **With RFA, everyone will be required to receive training, risk and psychosocial assessments, and go through the same processes to ensure all families are providing the same high level of care in order to meet the needs of children; and**
  - **The bill does not address what happens once children are in those homes by ensuring that all resource families receive the services and funding they need in order to support the child.**
- **The Governor's budget released on May 13, 2016 takes another step towards CCR. Starting January 1, 2017, the new Home Based Family Care Rate Structure (refer to Supporting Document) will replace the current rate structure for out of home care placements. Families who have already exited through adoption/guardianship will continue to receive funding under the old rate system. The proposed budget and rates are not final;**
- **The current rates are age based and not based on the level of needs of the children. Providing the same basic rate to all resource parents is a step in the right direction;**
- **The County has a specialized care system of rates that is based on the specialized needs of the children and is provided in addition to the**

basic rate. This system of care is not available to children in FFAs or children who are non-federally eligible, including those in the approved relative caregivers (ARC) program;

- This discrepancy also extends to the infant supplement, dual agency rate, and clothing allowance for youth who are not federally eligible or caregivers in the ARC program. Alliance and the Step Up Coalition is advocating for this to be resolved;
- The specialized care system is an optional program for Counties and LA County has the option of making this reform with waiver or realignment dollars without waiting for the State;
- AB403 created a construct of “core services” attached to FFA and group homes, which will become Short Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs). FFAs and STRTPs must be able to offer these core services to children;
- The services are robust, but most relatives and non-relative extended family members (NREFM) do not get attached to FFAs. AB 403 allows Counties to refer relatives and NREFMs to FFAs for services and support; however, we are advocating for language that will compel Counties to provide these services to relatives whether they are referred to FFAs or not;
- The rate structure includes a four tiered level of care system. A problem with the budget is that there’s no funding for support services allocated for at children at level 1. This assumes that a child who has been removed from their home and placed into foster care will not require some level of services and support to address the associated trauma. All children will need some level of services and support. Funding for this, needs to be built into the budget. Alliance for Children’s Rights will raise this concern with the budget committee this week.

Ms. Schwartz clarified the CCR Summary to the Commission and presented the following (refer to Supporting Document):

- Foster care recruitment and retention funding for Fiscal Year 2015 16 was \$17.2 million. The funding increased for FY 2016-17 to \$43.2 million and another \$11 million will be matched by the Federal government, totaling \$54.7 million;

- On the legislative side, Alliance for Children's Rights is pushing for the following:
  - o Home based family rates should be adequate to address the real, identified needs of children or if we will be relying on the specialized care rate system in each County, it should be made to apply to all families, not just the subset of families it has always applied to;
  - o The new RFA system to be rolled out in a family friendly way that accommodates relatives; and
  - o Concrete asks include establishing a funding mechanism to be in place at the moment a child is placed in a relative home. It's been reported by some counties that it's taking more than 90 days to get approved as a Resource Family. For children placed in relative homes on an emergency basis, funding is not provided during that time the relatives are going through the approval process.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Ms. Schwartz stated the following:

- Alliance for Children's Rights is sponsoring a bill this year that will include a funding mechanism via CalWORKs that starts on the day of placement. CalWORKs will fund \$400 per child, per month until the relative is approved;
- Alliance is also pushing for inclusion of clarification that the RFA process does not undermine the existing requirement for emergency placement requirement with relatives. There are still other obligations under other sections of the law to conduct assessments for emergency placement with relatives at the time of removal. We've heard that some Counties aren't doing emergency placements at all because of RFA;
- Alliance for Children's Rights is advocating for families to be approved once they reach the State's minimum requirement of 12 hours of training and funding to begin upon approval. Any additional training should be post approval;
- In terms of best practices, Ms. Schwartz suggests that LA County should think about building a Child Centered System that can be made available to relatives. If the County will refer families to an FFA to get support and services, there should be a streamlined path to do so. If the County should otherwise figure out how to provide support and



services directly to families to ensure that all kids are receiving the same level of supports and services based on their needs, regardless of placement; and

- The County should also continue collaboration and coordination with all the other entities outside of Department of Children and Family Services that are charged with the reform.

In response to questions posed by Tamara Hunter, Executive Director, Ms. Schwartz added the following:

- The delay in the Resource Family Approval process can be caused by a combination of things including the psychosocial assessment, risk assessment, training requirement, criminal background check, or exemption process; and
- Noted that an inclination on the part of counties to complete the various components of the RFA approval process sequentially instead of concurrently. LA County should consider completing the steps of the RFA process at the same time to expedite approval.

Ms. Schwartz also confirmed that other counties are only piloting the actual RFA component of CCR. The additional CCR components, such as the Child and Family Team and core services that FFA and STRTPs will be required to provide are coming in January 2017.

Commissioner Curry thanked Ms. Schwartz for making herself available to consult with individual Commissioners regarding CCR.

In response to questions posed by Mr. Browning and further questions from the Commission, Ms. Schwartz also added:

- Her understanding is that resource families who have already been approved will qualify for the new rates;
- There are some attempts to streamline the RFA process if the family currently has kids placed in their homes. The streamlining will occur for approved relatives, county licensed homes, and certified FFA homes that currently have children placed to make the conversion to RFA easier. The conversion will start after January 1, 2017 and will not conclude until January 2020;



- Clarified that RFA will not be handled solely by FFAs, Counties will also approve families under the RFA process;
- Making the training component of RFA readily available will be a challenge. Trainings offered in the evenings and weekends and in conjunction with child care services is helpful to relatives with children placed in their care; and
- Some of the early RFA implementation counties are piloting components of the required training online. One county provided training to families during the monthly social worker visit.

Attachments:    [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

#### **IV. DISCUSSIONS**

##### **7. Relative Caregivers:**

- What have we heard/learned?
- What are the implications for our work? (16-1872)

**Chair Kang introduced this item and stressed the importance of the Relative Caregiver Committee's (Committee) role in gathering information and opened it up for discussion:**

- Commissioner Curry specified the importance of collaborating with organizations and agencies that represent relative caregivers, including the Department of Children and Families (DCFS).
- Commissioner Biondi suggested conducting an assessment on situations in which children are placed in multiple homes with non-relatives, when all that is required for a relative placement is upfront funding to assist the relative with housing. The committee should examine the availability of funds from various sources that can be allocated towards housing to expedite the process.
- Chair Kang indicated that a recent study identified programs in which foster family agencies in other states are hiring families and placing them in larger housing if needed.
- Angie Schwartz, Alliance for Children's Rights/Step Up Coalition, indicated that California requires a minimum 12 hour training course; however, agencies, counties, and foster family agencies can require additional

training as part of the approval process. On many occasions children are placed in the home prior to the completion of training; however, funding is not provided until all training requirements are met. Ms. Schwartz added that the Alliance for Children's Rights/Step Up Coalition is requesting changes to the process to expedite the beginning of funding as soon as the child is placed since it has already been determined that the home is safe enough for the child to reside.

- Commissioner Curry indicated the importance of respite care funds and suggested the Committee collaborate with agencies that can assist in restoring it.
- Chair Kang shared his experience with the current foster parent approval process and indicated that the process is not easy and certain requirements are not feasible for all families.
- Pamela Meeker Stolz, Member of the Public, asked if requirements from both the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) need to be completed prior to receiving funds and if both spouses are required to complete trainings for the Resource Family Approval process. Ms. Schwartz confirmed that certain ASFA requirements are included within CCR requirements; however, caregivers must complete any additional requirements by ASFA, and both spouses are required to complete trainings any other additional RFA requirements.
- Mary Lee, Member of the Public, indicated that KEPS (Kinship Education Program) classes were dropped although these classes provided information and resources to relative caregivers that assist them in navigating the system. It is unfair that kinship caregivers aren't receiving assistance with navigating the system. The classes need to be reinstated and well publicized so that there is a higher attendance rate.
- Ms. Schwartz added that a webinar will take place next week on May 25th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. that will feature the voices of kinship caregivers; an email will be forwarded to Tamara N. Hunter, MSW, Executive Director to distribute to all commissioners.
- Commissioner Teague asked representatives from Grandparents as Parents (GAP) and Raising Our Children's Kids (ROCK) what anticipated changes do they foresee under the new process. Sylvie De Toledo representative from GAP confirmed that funding is needed to meet requirements such as hiring additional staff.

- Cheryl Hymen representative from ROCK indicated that the agency has merged with a larger organization that can fund the hiring of additional staff. Ms. Hymen added that relative caregiver agencies continue to build relationships with social workers.
- Chair Kang asked if there is a consortium of Kinship Community Based Organizations; Ms. Hymen indicated that there is no official group.

#### **V. MISCELLANEOUS**

8. Matters not posted on the agenda, to be discussed and (if requested) placed on the agenda for action at a future meeting of the Commission, or matters requiring immediate action because of an emergency situation or where the need to take action arose subsequent to the posting of the agenda. (16-1873)

**There were no matters presented.**

9. Opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on item(s) of interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission. (16-1874)

**The following Members of the Public addressed the Commission:**

- Cheral Hymen of Raising Our Children's Kids (ROCK) asked what mechanism will be used to follow up on the issues that were raised by ROCK and Grandparents As Parents (GAP) and what the timeline will be. Executive Director Tamara N. Hunter, MSW, indicated that the Commission established a Relative Caregiver Committee that will be meeting today to discuss the identified concerns, however, with regard to case specific issues, DCFS has been provided with information to contact relative caregivers to address immediate needs. The Committee plans to work with the relative caregiver community, as well as DCFS to help address some of these issues.
- Imrith Martinez expressed his gratitude toward the Commission for its assistance, Ms. De Toledo of GAP and DCFS staff that have reached out to him. Although his siblings are not in his custody yet, there is progress being made and he believes that the discussion regarding his case will help others in the same situation.
- Margarita Olivas expressed her gratitude for GAP, which has helped her over the past few years. Ms. Olivas shared her personal experience with raising her daughter's four children, two of which were born with medical conditions. Ms. Olivas indicated that foster parents receive more funding than relatives and the system does not work in favor of

relative caregivers. She indicated that she requested additional funding due to their health conditions and to date has not received additional funding. Chair Kang referred Ms. Olivas to DCFS staff for case specific assistance.

**10. Adjournment. (16-1875)**

**The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.**